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ECHOES FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BY DR. J. D. MOODY.

[Delivered November 1, 1897.]

I have had the good fortune, lately, to pick up in an old book stall, two old books, one a copy of the *European Magazine*, published in London in 1782, the closing year of our war for independence, and the other, the *Political Magazine*, likewise published in London, but a few years later, in 1787.

The *European Magazine* contained every month a summary of parliamentary matters, the burden of which was the American war. How vividly those records called up school days in American history. How far away those old times seemed. And yet, here were the old familiar names, Washington, Greene, Marion, Cornwallis, Valley Forge, Yorktown, Eutaw Springs. A report of this latter battle read as if it might have occurred but yesterday.

These records disclose in the very words of the chief actors themselves, what a host of friends we had in the British Parliament; or rather, what a strong opposition the mad policy of a mad King, had in the councils of the government itself. The struggle on the part of Great Britain had been a costly one, in men and money. The opposition had been gaining ground in proportion as the reverses became greater. On the reception of the news of Cornwallis's surrender, this feeling culminated in fierce attacks on the government.

But I will let the books speak for themselves. On November 27, 1781, the King addressed the House of Lords, in which he used the following words: "No endeavors have been wanting on my part to extinguish that spirit of rebellion which our enemies have found means to foment and maintain in the colonies, and to restore to my deluded subjects in America that happy and prosperous condition which they formerly derived from a due obedience to the laws; but the late misfortune in that quarter calls loudly for your firm concurrence and assistance, to frustrate the designs of our enemies, equally prejudicial to the real interests of America and to those of Great Britain."

We smile when we read "deluded subjects." How well his ap-

peal was received, we learn from a statement that in the House of Commons, on that same day, William Pitt declared that a day would soon come, when the issue as to prolonging the war would be met. On being asked when that day would arrive, he replied: "When His Majesty's ministers came down and asked for 7000 men as a substitution for the army which we had lost." On January 23, 1782. Mr. Fox, in criticising the government, "then went over a regular succession of the principal naval events. He began with the system of sending out all of the frigates of this country to America, in order to plunder, burn and destroy all the trade and settlements of the Americans, so as from the infancy of the war to cut off all future hopes of a reconciliation." On February 22, in the House of Commons, Gen. Conway moved an address to the King, desiring His Majesty would discontinue the American war, and in which he said "he should not state the progress of the war, the large supplies which had been granted, the unfortunate applications of those supplies; neither should he take notice of the inhuman, cruel and uncharacteristical manner the war had been carried on, such as burning towns, ravaging countries, destroying commerce." February 27, continuing his attack on the government, he said: "In the name of God, what could be the motive of ministers, that they wished to drive every spark of love, every tie of the Americans, whom he would still call brethren, from us? Did we suppose that by the infernal plan of desolation, burning, ravaging, slaughtering and ravishing of these oppressed people, that we could ever make them love us?"

And yet there are writers who protest that American statements as to the excesses of the British and Tories during the revolutionary war, are overdrawn, and not reliable! Gilmore Sims never put it stronger than does Gen. Conway himself.

Substitute Spain for Great Britain in the above debate, and Cuba for America, and it would sound like an Associated Press dispatch of today. Under date of January 22, a news item states that "at 1 o'clock the Rt. Hon. the Earl Cornwallis arrived in the metropolis, accompanied by Gen. Arnold and his family." On March 6, in a debate in the House of Commons, Lord Surrey said, "it was a matter of great surprise to him, when he attended the Speaker of the House to His Majesty, with an address for peace with America, to see the man most obnoxious to the Americans, standing at the right hand of His Majesty." He spoke of Gen. Arnold.

Benedict Arnold! How the boys' hearts beat faster and their

hands clenched, whenever reading that chapter of American history detailing Arnold's perfidy! And here, almost a lifetime from that study, and so unexpectedly, do we come across this old contemporaneous account of him. Even some British hearts rebelled at associating with him.

Under date of January 7, this incident was mentioned: "A French frigate, having on board troops for America, fell in with a British brig—captured it, put a prize crew on board, and went on her way. The Englishmen, who had been made prisoners, felt for the soft spot in the French, made them drunk, recaptured the brig and ran into the English port of Swansea."

On page 83 I find this very curious incident: "The new ninety-gun ship, the *Atlas*, that was lately launched at Chatham, had at her head, the figure of *Atlas* supporting the globe. By an error of the builder, the globe was placed so high, that part of it was obliged to be cut away before the bowsprit could be fitted in. This happened to be no other than all North America, and what was more remarkable, the person who was ordered to take the hatchet and slice it off, was an American."

I do not remember having seen this story in print before. It was certainly a very singular coincidence.

A certain Count O'Rourke of an ancient Irish family, and who had been for some time in French service, returned home on the breaking out of the American war, and, according to a biographical notice in the magazine, proposed to the British government to raise three regiments of Roman Catholics in Ireland to be employed against the Americans. His offer was declined.

On January 31, in the House of Lords, an inquiry was ordered as to the execution of Col. Haynes in Charleston. The execution was severely condemned as having been done without due process of law. All the papers in the case had been cast into the ocean by Lord Rawdon, when his vessel was captured, to escape capture by the Americans, so no action was taken. In the February number is a letter from Col. Stewart of the British army, giving an account of the battle of Eutaw Springs, in the September previous. A peculiar expression is found in the following extract: "I omitted to inform your lordship, in its proper place, of the army's having been for some time much in want of bread, there being no old corn or mills near me. I was therefore under the necessity of sending out rooting parties from each corps under an officer, to collect pota-

toes every morning at daybreak." "Rooting parties" is worth resurrecting. It will match Sherman's bummers. But, shades of Gen, Marion, what will we do with that potato story of his now?

These, and the following numbers, are largely taken up with bitter charges and counter-charges in relation to the American war, and principally inspired by the news of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

The following news item, under date of February 7, shows that the young republic had some sturdy representatives, who knew how to talk plain American, and did it, too: "The following requisition was delivered on the 9th inst., by Mr. Adams, the Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America, at the Hague, to the President of the Assembly of their High Mightinesses: 'Sir—On the 14th of May, I had the honor of a conference with the President of the Assembly of their High Mightinesses, in which I informed him that I had received a commission from the United States of America, with full powers and instructions to propose and conclude a friendly and commercial treaty between the United States of America, and the United Provinces of the Netherlands. In the same conference I had the honor of demanding an audience of their High Mightinesses, for the purpose of presenting credential letters and my full powers. The president assured me that he would impart all that I had said to their High Mightinesses, that the affair might be transmitted to the different members of the sovereignty of this country, to undergo their deliberations and decisions. I have not yet been honored with an answer, and on that account I now have the honor of addressing myself to you, sir, to demand of you, as I now do demand, a categorical answer, which I may transmit to Congress.

J. ADAMS."

"High Mightinesses" sounds a good deal as though he were addressing the big mogul of some modern secret society.

On February 22 Gen. Conway, in an address to the King, desiring that His Majesty would discontinue the American war; plead for some attempt to conciliate the American people. He stated that they "had 76,000 men—on paper—in America, the expense of which was so great, that he was free to say, that not only this, but no country on earth could support it." The world must have grown somewhat richer since this 76,000 army was such a financial burden. The funny man was in evidence in those days, as well as now. The government had appointed a new Secretary of the

American Colonies, a Mr. Ellis. He made his maiden speech. Mr. Burke, in answer said "he expected to hear from a new Minister of the Cabinet, new measures; but sorry he was to find otherwise. The insect was the same when it crawled upon the leaves, as now that it had thrown off its skin, and blazed out in all the splendor of a butterfly—its doctrines were the same when it had sat, snug rolled up in its woolly coat, as now, that it had expanded its golden wings to the sunbeams." And more of the same sort.

After a heated discussion, a vote was taken on the motion to discontinue the American war; 193 votes were cast for the motion and 194 against it, a majority of only one to continue the war. That was an instance where mighty interests hung on only one vote.

On February 27, Gen. Conway renewed his motion. He stated that petitions had been received from the towns of London and Bristol against the war; also, that "you could not go into a coffee-house in any part of the town, but the universal cry was against the American war." He spoke of Washington as "that great Gen. Washington." He further said: "An honorable gentleman, in last Friday's debate, had declared that, lately on the continent he had been in company where it was asked of what country he was, and on being told he was an Englishman, they all sneered and turned up their noses; but afterward, in another company, it was whispered he was an American, and he was caressed by every one." "The Americans, he had been credily informed, wished for peace, but was it possible for any people to be weak enough to trust to men that were continually shifting their ground as our present Ministers were, calling the war one day a war of posts, another a defensive war, and at last a French-American war? He would not contend about mere words, for a rose, to be sure, called by any other name, would smell full as sweet as if called by its proper name, and on that head he would let them have the fragrant smell of the word, American."

"Mr. Hill, in a most laughable vein of ridicule and satire, reprobated the system of His Majesty's Ministers. He said they might each be entitled a Don Quixote; the American war was their Dulcinea del Tobosa. Mr. Secretary Ellis was the Rosiante, and he would no doubt be, in a short time, raised up to the stall in which his predecessor was now ranged, where, perhaps, a sword, found in the fields of Minden, would be laid across his chest to be dubbed a knight." This badinage could not go on forever. A crisis was

approaching. Gen. Conway offered the following motion on the 27th:

"Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House, that the further continuance of an offensive war in America, for the purpose of subduing by force, the revolted colonies, totally impracticable, inasmuch as it weakens that force which we ought to employ against our European enemies, etc., etc."

Thus we see that it was not altogether our own prowess that gained us the victory.

At 1:30 o'clock in the morning a vote was taken on the government's motion to postpone further debate for a fortnight. It was lost by 19 votes; then the main question, to discontinue the war, was put and carried. The chronicler does not give the majority. For us, this was an eventful occasion. The passing of the night in England ushered in the dawn of peace in America.

In the Political Magazine, London, September, 1787, I notice the establishment of an Academy of Polite Arts, in Mexico, South America. Evidently geographical distinctions were not very well understood in those days.

In the same number, under the head "American Intelligence," I find this remarkable statement: "We learn from Philadelphia that trade is nearly extinct; money very scarce, taxes almost insupportable, and the clamor against their feeble government almost universal."

In the December number I find the following doleful statement, taken from a letter: "Baltimore is all going to decay. Most of the merchants and capital people are become insolvent. The newspapers have sometimes eighteen or twenty of their names in them of a day as insolvent. This country is ruined by the scarcity of money by the weight of taxes, which the people are unable to bear and the loss of that trade which she used to enjoy whilst connected with Great Britain. Most of the people with whom I am acquainted, many of whom were very zealous in the cause of independence, are now willing to be once more under British government."

Like voices from the grave, these echoes from the revolutionary times come to us, and freighted with the hopes and the bitterness of human interests of those far-away times, they bring closer to us the men and people of that great struggle for national existence.